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ABSTRACT

Described is a planning process that integrates program, budget and facility concerns and requirements in a way that provides University of Utah administrators with alternatives that encourage them to initiate controlled change. Outlined are eight strategies and processes that deviate from the traditional total (institution-wide) comprehensive (all functions and programs) approach. These strategies and processes address such topics as planning incentives, identification of relevant subject matter, how to aid administrators in reallocating resources, providing planning staff assistance, rationalizing the plan, and plan review leading to action. (Author)

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INTEGRATED PLANNING TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE USE AND REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

INTEGRATED PLANNING TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE
USE AND REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

This paper describes a planning process that integrates program, budget and facility concerns and requirements in a way that provides University of Utah administrators with alternatives that encourage them to initiate controlled change. Unlike many papers on the subject of college and university planning this one outlines eight strategies and processes that deviate from the traditional total (institution-wide) comprehensive (all functions and programs) approach. These strategies and processes address such topics as planning incentives, identification of relevant subject matter, how to aid administrators in reallocating resources, providing planning staff assistance, rationalizing the plan, and plan review leading to action.

INTEGRATED PLANNING TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE USE AND REALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe how college and university administrators can utilize the planning process to yield alternatives that assist them in initiating controlled change. Specific attention will focus on the integration of program, budget, and facility concerns and requirements directed at improving organization structures, procedures, programs, and services. The need for integrated planning is motivated by a concern on the part of administrators to maintain institutional vitality by improving the use and reallocation of resources. By resource reallocation I mean the phasing down or elimination of some programs or services to permit the strengthening or addition of others.

To avoid theorizing, I will draw upon planning experiences acquired at several colleges and universities, especially the University of Utah. Integrated planning at this large institution recognizes many of the organizational and operational characteristics unique to colleges and universities but seldom considered by planners; especially those who employ processes derived from private enterprise or developed for a universal audience.

To set the stage for this presentation, I would like you to be aware of the following:

1. The term planning, as I use it, should be interpreted as defined by Dror (1971, p. 106). "Planning is the process of preparing a set of decisions for action in the future, directed at achieving goals by preferable means." The one component in this definition I wish to emphasize is "decisions for action." The planning pro-

cess I will outline requires the preparation of plans that include alternatives intended to aid decision makers in controlling change.

2. Integrated planning requires that program, budget, and facility implications are identified and included in final plans. This important element of planning is frequently overlooked or neglected, yet it is the basis for eventual decisions and actions.
3. The terms administrators, decision makers and planning initiators are used interchangeably. They will refer to people who exercise influence over institutional, academic, and support unit policies and operations through: a) the control of information, b) the allocation of resources, and c) the use of persuasion. Unlike many approaches to planning, the process I will describe recognizes that such influence rests (in varying degrees) with several groups of administrators, namely, executive officers, deans, division heads, and department chairpersons.
4. Finally, the University of Utah planning approach functions in an institutional environment made up of deans and department chairpersons (unit heads) who are expected by the central administration to manage their units. These persons are given considerable autonomy. Also, the academic vice president limits, as much as possible, the paper work required of deans and department chairpersons. Therefore, use of planning models that require extensive data collection by units is not encouraged. These circumstances, coupled with lingering dissatisfaction of past planning experiences set the stage for the current approach.

Planning Strategies and Process

Recently implemented planning strategies and processes at the University of Utah deviate from the traditional total (institution-wide) comprehensive (all functions and programs) approach in several ways. I wish to outline our planning approach and present a brief rationale for it.

1. The central administration does not require institutional constituents to participate in a formal-total university planning effort.

The University's executive officers encourage planning in a variety of ways. However, they refrain from imposing planning directives that must be followed by all institutional units at the same time. This approach is taken for several reasons. First, executive officers recognize their locations at the top of the institution's organization structure limits their ability to instill and maintain planning enthusiasm in college and department administrators and faculty. Second, the executive officers also recognize that not all colleges and departments have the same needs or face similar issues. Third, they recognize that not all unit needs or issues lend themselves to planning. Fourth, the current budget constraints placed on the University and the minimal amount of discretionary resources available limit central administrators from rewarding most planning efforts with additional resources. This fact has tended to discourage total institutional planning for fear it would raise false expectations regarding the availability of resources. Finally, the executive officers recognize their time constraints and realize they would be unable to review and comprehend all unit plans if submitted at once.

2. Those who request planning are encouraged to define topics and issues that relate to their needs.

Planning is requested by numerous people within educational organizations. At the University of Utah deans and department chairpersons are the typical initiators of this process. However, regardless of who exercises planning leadership, it is essential that the focus of planning efforts be defined so that activities can be channeled in a direction that will result in a plan of interest to decision makers. Experience has taught me this is not always the case. Many administrators who request others to plan (especially executive officers) fail to identify the issues they wish addressed. This frequent oversight is a major cause of planning frustration and failure.

At the University of Utah executive officers, deans, and department chairpersons all participate in the identification of planning subject matter. However, unit administrators are the final determiners of the planning subject matter which will become the focus of their attention.

3. A resource reallocation planning guide, prepared by Academic and Financial Planning (AFP) staff, is made available to planners to assist them in defining planning subject matter, addressing policy issues, and collecting data.

Whenever executive officers, deans, or department chairpersons request others to plan, they should provide the basic framework within which the planning process should take place. Unfortunetely, many planning activities often begin without guidelines that shape and condition the planning process. By guidelines, I mean a framework designed to assist planners in organizing and implementing the process to encourage the preparation of final plans which decision makers will find meaningful.

Academic and Financial Planning staff at the University of Utah prepared a "Resource Reallocation Planning Guide" as a service to assist University planners and as a subtle way to influence the planning process.

The guide contains several sections: 1) an outline of planning assumptions pertaining to available resources, student enrollments, and the need for resource reallocation; 2) a list of issues and concerns of interest to many academic administrators; 3) table shells to aid planners in their collection of data; and 4) a request for estimates of the proposed budget and facility implications (added or reduced) of planned changes.

Interest in, and use of, the planning guide has been encouraging. Unit planners, especially deans have welcomed guidance in their planning process; yet they want to feel they are in control of it. The planning guide, which unit planners can modify, meets this need. In addition, the guide provides a non-threatening way to inform planners of the constraints they operate under as well as the issues they should consider when planning. Finally, the guide requires the integration of program, budget, and facility requirements for each planned change desired by the units participating in the process.

4. Unit planners are encouraged to focus their attention on the sub-department level or what might be called areas of specialization.

Over the past decade attempts by University executive officers to alter the role of colleges and departments have failed miserably. Also, attempts to meet state imposed budget cuts have on occasion resulted in across-the-board reductions in department budgets. This approach, as you know, weakens strong departments as well as furthers the demise of mediocre ones.

These lessons have taught us that if change and resource reallocation is to occur within the University, it will require action from deans and department chairpersons. To implement change or meet the challenge of resource reductions without weakening programs perceived to be of high quality, requires that administrators exercise leadership by initiating

specific processes and procedures that are operationally feasible. I believe the implementation of a planning process that focuses attention on departmental areas of specialization is a reasonable way to approach the issue of change and resource reallocation. This seems reasonable and rational because:

A. Faculty tend to think and plan at this level, that is, in terms of their academic specialty.

B. Students tend to think about their majors in these terms.

C. Deans and department chairpersons would be better able to assess the needs and plans of their units if data are aggregated around these "natural" subdivisions.

D. Data collected for sub-departments can easily be aggregated by department, discipline, or college for review by central administration or external agencies.

The resource reallocation planning guide prepared by AFP staff includes table shells intended to assist unit planners in the collection of data at the sub-department level. The data categories recommended for collection include faculty, students, courses, and costs.

5. Academic program, budget, and facility planning staff assistance is offered to unit heads who desire help in their efforts.

Another factor that inhibits planning is the lack of the knowledgeable personnel to participate in the process. For example, many planning initiators assume that their own personnel can prepare plans for their organizations and programs. This assumption is frequently false because most faculty and administrative leaders lack the necessary training and skill to prepare integrated program, budget and facility plans. My experience with college and university administrators indicates that few possess planning skills. Most of these decision makers are trained to teach and do research. This training and experience has limited utility when applied to planning and management

activities. In other words, the administrative decision making environment is foreign to many academicians who accept department or college leadership positions. However, these positions provide a new kind of opportunity to those who accept the challenge. To overcome deficiencies in training and experience and to assist administrators achieve their role expectations they are offered the assistance of planning consultants who occupy University staff positions in areas of program, budget, and facilities administration. This staff assistance tends to help rationalize planning through communication between staff consultants and unit planners regarding issues, resource needs, and the preparation of alternative solutions. Also, acceptance of such assistance tends to ensure that resultant plans take a form applicable to the needs of central decision makers.

The staff consultants available to assist unit planners include people with knowledge and experience in program planning and evaluation, budgeting, institutional research, facilities inventory and utilization, plus facilities programming and design. So far, many unit planners have welcomed staff support to assist them in defining goals and objectives, collecting and interpreting data, plus preparing budget and facility resource estimates.

6. Unit planners are encouraged to consider resource reallocation as a means to facilitate change.

Many college and university chief executives concerned about inadequate fiscal and facilities resources to maintain institutional vitality are seeking ways to reallocate resources within their organizations. As mentioned earlier, resource reallocation implies the phasing down or elimination of some programs to permit the strengthening or addition of others. The president of my institution posed this challenge to his deans with the assurance that they could initiate change through resource reallocation without fear of losing the resources freed in the process. This strategy has merit for two reasons. First,

it enables deans to manage their own colleges and gives them the opportunity to exercise strong leadership in this endeavor. Second, it encourages key administrators to plan with their faculty.

7. Unit plans are critiqued by a planning team comprised of planning, budgeting, and facilities staff experts.

Once final plans have taken draft form, a team of University staff members review them to ensure that they address appropriate issues, problems, needs, and more importantly, that they will encourage decisions. This review serves several purposes. It informs support staff, who ultimately would play a role in assisting units implement their plans, of proposed direction and needs. It permits these staff members an opportunity to question and suggest changes to the plan. These reviews also ensure that plans identify change oriented goals, suggest alternative actions, and include resource requirements. In addition, it permits appropriate central administrative support staff to suggest alternative solutions to needs or issues that may not have been considered by unit planners. This preliminary review also affords unit planners an opportunity to improve their plans before being reviewed by decision makers. Finally, and probably most importantly, this critique stimulates informal discussion between unit planners and central administrative staff on a variety of issues of interest and concern to both.

8. Completed unit plans are drafted in the form of a policy paper and reviewed by the appropriate decision makers.

To simplify the review of plans by decision makers, AFP staff assist planners in their drafting of a policy paper. This paper highlights: 1) the proposed change objectives sought by planners, 2) a brief justification for the proposed changes, 3) their effects on other institutional units, 4) a prioritized listing of budget and facilities resources needed to achieve planned objectives, 5) a time frame outlining the occurrence of major events,

6) policy issues reflected in the plan, and 7) alternative solutions and strategies deemed acceptable in implementing plans.

The drafting of a policy paper serves several purposes. First, it serves to standardize unit plans so that over time a total institutional plan can emerge. Second, it summarizes plans in a form of value to decision makers. This summary portrays alternative actions relating to plan implementation. These alternatives generally depict different mixes of program, budget, and facility strategies and requirements. When finished, the policy paper is received and discussed by planners and administrators. This activity marks the end of the planning process and the beginning of plan implementation.

Summary and Conclusions

The process I have outlined has been in effect at the University of Utah for a little over one year. During this time three deans, the Museum of Natural History Director, and three department chairmen have exercised leadership and completed the process. By so doing, each has implemented the resource reallocation model in its entirety and displayed the ability to array organizational resources by areas of specialization. These unit heads have found this approach to planning very useful and informative.

As a result of these pilot efforts, the following observations can be made:

1. Formal planning directives by central administrators are not necessary to motivate unit planning. Unit needs and issues are usually great enough to warrant such activities if planning assistance can be provided.
2. Executive officers must frequently reaffirm their needs for plans and offer the services of support staff to deans and department chairpersons to keep them thinking about the future of their organization.

3. The issue of resource reallocation can be effectively communicated to unit planners through planning support staff assigned to assist deans and department chairpersons.
4. Many plans can be implemented to some degree without direct central administration support if units are willing to reallocate resources or alter their own policies to achieve change.
5. Executive officers must keep support staff (planning consultants) appraised of their concerns, needs, and the issues they wish units to address, as well as, the constraints which affect planning.
6. By communicating with unit planners regarding their management related issues and needs, planning consultants can encourage other administrative support staff to initiate special studies and/or generate planning and management information of value to those unit administrators.
7. This approach to planning permits decision makers to deal with a manageable number of issues confronting a select group of units at any one point in time. In addition, central administrators are better able to articulate the needs of specific units to external bodies, such as State Boards of Education, donors, etc.
8. Realistic estimates of budget and facilities resources compliment program plans.
9. The process does not require a basic overhaul of the system of governance and decision making. The political realities of the institution are preserved and respected. The relationships among faculty, department heads, deans, and central administrators are not altered. In short, the planning process provides occasion for increased levels of communication among these persons.

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